



**TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SB 4 AN ACT CONCERNING CONNECTICUT'S  
PRESENT AND FUTURE HOUSING NEEDS**

**DORIS A. MALDONADO MENDEZ,**

Statewide Bilingual Health Information Specialist/Certified Community Health Worker

**PARENTS AVAILABLE TO HELP CT, INC.**

February 28, 2023

Dear Housing Committee of the Connecticut General Assembly,

My name is Doris Maldonado Mendez, and I am a Latine born with disabilities and adoptive parent of young adult twins with developmental disabilities and certified medically complex foster parent of a 5 yo/10 month old. I am employed as the Statewide Bilingual HIS/Certified CHW for **PATH CT**, CT's Family to Family Health Information Center; Chair the **CT Council on Developmental Disabilities**, a State Agency; Guardian ad Litem for **Children in Placement**, Co-Chair of **Keep the Promise Coalition** and serve on the Research Committee of the **HUSKY 4 Immigrants Coalition**.

**PATH CT** serves children and youth with special health care needs statewide. F2Fs are in federal statute providing crucial services to families, providers and communities regardless of immigrant status and without regard to their ability to pay for the care they receive. The **CTCDD** is entirely funded by the federal Administration for Community Living to support all efforts that will increase access to alternative home and community-based services to meet the needs of people who prefer to receive care services and supports in their home or community, rather than in an institutional setting.

Imagine having to live on just \$1062 a month. Or imagine being told you are not allowed to have more than \$1600 in savings for emergencies, let alone to save to buy a car. Imagine that you must live under both limitations if you want to have access to the healthcare needed and shelter. I, like many others in your backyard, do. Surviving several invisible disabilities, medical malpractice, domestic abuse and couch surfing, I am forced to survive on \$1600 and part time work while paying for Medicare, housing, heating, costly dietary food, out of pocket expenses, copays and transportation.

Thank you, Representative Luxenberg, for recognizing that “the economic devastation that’s been caused by the COVID era and the post-COVID economy has hurt those who are most vulnerable in our state”.

- 31% of COVID-19 deaths in June 2021 were older adults, individuals with disabilities, and their care givers in congregate care settings
- Individuals with disabilities continue to face impediments to fair housing choice, as evidenced by 61.7% of fair housing complaints in 2019 were based on disability & failure to make reasonable accommodations (Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing (AFFH) Fact Sheet <https://acl.gov/HousingAndServices/Engaging-Fair-Housing-Webinar-Series>)

"Who are people with complex needs? ...adults with complex health and social needs whose incomes do not always cover basic living needs such as food, transportation, and housing. Health needs include both physical and behavioral conditions, including mental health and substance use challenges. Social needs include stable housing, nutritious food, and transportation, to name a few." <https://www.chcs.org/project/developing-a-patient-guided-complex-care-research-agenda/>

Over 46,000 adults live with developmental disabilities in Connecticut, and we all need a place to live. About 36,000 of us are unemployed and receiving only Social Security and other limited cash benefits or have earnings below the poverty level. Only about 6,000 of us with developmental disabilities in Connecticut receive direct housing benefit and no more than about 12,000 receive assistance in finding housing. At least 18,000 of us must find our own affordable housing and ***we do not*** receive any assistance in doing so.

The Council appreciates the protections for renters, the creation of workforce housing opportunity development projects, and increased housing opportunities for persons experiencing homelessness, veterans, apprentices, and newly hired employees in S.B. No. 4 more is needed for individuals with developmental disabilities.

The statutes could require local infrastructure and zoning regulations –

- - to take meaningful actions that replace segregated living patterns with integrated and balanced living patterns, address significant disparities in housing needs and access to opportunities, and foster inclusive communities;
- - to promote housing choice and economic diversity in housing through the express allowance of housing that could feasibly be occupied by both low- and moderate-income households;
- - to expressly allow the development of housing which will meet the housing needs identified in the state's consolidated plan for housing and community development;
- - to provide for the development of affordable housing opportunities, including, but not limited to, multifamily dwellings, accessory apartments, residential buildings containing at least four dwelling units, mixed-use buildings that allow dwelling units, cluster development, and middle housing, which includes duplexes, triplexes, quadplexes, cottage clusters and townhouses;
- - to require members of a zoning, planning or planning and zoning commission, or zoning board of appeals to receive training related to affordable and fair housing policies.

Partnerships across housing, transportation, aging and disability, and health are essential to ensure housing stability. Restoring Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing (AFFH) Definitions and Certifications: interim final rule that restores key definition and certifications from the 2015 AFFH Rule to its regulations implementing the Fair Housing Act; Consistent with this obligation, HUD funding recipients must certify to taking meaningful actions, in addition to

combating discrimination, that overcome patterns of segregation and foster inclusive communities free from barriers that restrict access to opportunity based on protected characteristics covered by the Fair Housing Act, which includes disability.

<https://acl.gov/sites/default/files/2022-06/FHEO%20ACL%20Disability%20Fact%20Sheet%206-22-2022.pdf>

The cost of housing at all levels is pricing out renters and potential owners, increasing housing instability and homelessness in Connecticut. HUD defines **cost-burdened families as those “who pay more than 30 percent of their income for housing”** and **“may have difficulty affording necessities such as food, clothing, transportation, and medical care.”** Severe rent burden is defined as ***paying more than 50% of one’s income on rent***. Cost-burdened households have little left over each month to spend on other necessities such as food, clothing, utilities, and health care.

In closing, as you witness the testimonies being shared, *“we urge you to consider the viability of democracy when someone who does not speak English as a first language or needs communication support services such as ASL and is only afforded 3 mins to share their testimony. Kindly acknowledge that access to housing and healthcare includes being able to effectively and efficiently share thought, which will prove difficult if there are a lack of resources and time”* Please empower language access so that ***all*** may be included to participate and support your endeavors of improving our communities during the legislative process.

Parents Available to Help CT, the CTCDD, CIP & HUSKY 4 Immigrants ask you to include funding to provide housing for marginalized community members in our state.

***“Nada Sobre Nosotros Sin Nosotros.”***

Respectfully/Estimadamente,

Doris A. Maldonado Mendez, M.Ed., GAL, CCHW, HIS, YMHFA